

MINUTES
COUNCIL ON VETERANS PROGRAMS
Meeting of October 20, 2016
Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove
21425 G Spring Street, Union Grove, WI 53182

Members

David Schmidt, AMVETS
Oscar Castaneda, American GI Forum
Paul Fisk, American Legion
Vacant, American Red Cross
Paul Fine, ANU
Gary Traynor, Blinded Veterans Assoc.
Colin Moten, CVSOA
Larry Hill, DAV
Peter Gilbert, JWV
Phillip Landgraf, MCL
Roger Fetterly, MOAA
William Lobeck, MOPH (Excused)
William Sims, NABV
Marie Annette Epnett-Murphy, NCUSA
John Recklies (Excused)
Dale Nelson, PVA
Lester Bischoff, TREAS (Excused)
Elizabeth Benn, UWV
Mike Furgal, VFW
Steve House, VVA
Rich Peters, VVAW
William May, WACVO
Bill Hustad
Inactive, Am. Ex-POWs
Inactive, USSVWWII
Inactive, CWV

Others Present (not all inclusive)

John Gaedke, Board Chair
John Townsend, Board Member
Representative Ken Skowronski

WDVA Present

Secretary John Scocos
Assistant Deputy Secretary Dan Buttery
Randy Nitschke, Veterans Homes Administrator
Susan Seibert, Union Grove Commandant
Laura Bruce, Union Grove Deputy Commandant
Angie Reindl, OOS ESA

1. Call to order, Pledge of Allegiance, roll call

The meeting of the Council on Veterans Programs was called to order by Chair Elizabeth Benn and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Certification of notice of meeting

The meeting was certified as being properly noticed.

3. Roll Call

Roll was called and a quorum was present.

4. Action on minutes of July 20, 2016 COVP meeting

It was moved, seconded and carried on a voice vote to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2016.

5. Strategic Plan Update

The web address for Strategic Plan Updates for all state agencies (<https://performance.wi.gov>) was sent to all Council Members.

6. ACT 386 Status Update

Motion made, seconded and carried on a voice vote to have the Council Chair invite the Chair of the Council on Veteran Employment or the Chair's representative to provide to an update at the next meeting of the Council on Veterans Programs.

7. Suicide Prevention

Assistant Deputy Secretary Dan Buttery provided an update on current suicide prevention initiatives.

Zero Veteran Suicide Initiative Goal - Find the most effective way to address the issue of Veteran suicide in Wisconsin

8. Transportation

Request to have a copy of the transportation document compiled by Ken Grant's staff be sent to all council members.

Mr. Hill, DAV, will provide DAV data to council members at the next meeting.

Mr. May, WACVO, requested that CVSO's poll their members to find out what areas have issues with transportation.

Mr. Peters, VVAW, suggested the creation of a website that would contain transportation resources by location.

9. King Audit and Union Grove Update

King audit update provided by Secretary Scocos and Division of Veterans Homes Administrator Randy Nitschke. Department welcomes the audit and will fully cooperate with all requests made by the Legislative Audit Bureau.

Commandant Susan Seibert provided an update on the Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove.

10. Future CVSO structure changes

Chair suggests that the Council be proactive and be prepared should there be future proposals to change the CVSO structure.

Mr. Moten, CVSO Association, shared two resolutions from the recent CVSO conference (Attachment 1– Regionalization of County Veterans Service Offices, Attachment 2 – Returning the CVSO/TVSO Grant to a Block Grant Structure). He also provided copies of two press releases from the CVSO Association (CVSOA-Wisconsin position in response to allegations at King Veterans Home – Attachment 3, County Veterans Service Officers Association of WI Elect New Officers – Attachment 4).

11. Update on 2015-2016 AB 467

Mr. Landgraf, Marine Corps League, encouraged the other council members to support a future attempt to have USH 8 named as the Mideast Conflict Highway.

12. Proposed Revision of Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit

Mr. Hill, DAV, shared a resolution passed by DAV that outlines their proposed changes to the requirements for the property tax credit (Attachment 5).

13. Proposed Revision of the WI G.I. Bill

Mr. Hill, DAV, shared a resolution passed by DAV that outlines their proposed changes to the requirements for the WI G.I. Bill (Attachment 6).

A motion was made, seconded and carried on a voice vote for the Council on Veterans Programs to support the DAV changes outlined in the DAV resolutions related to the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit and the Wisconsin G.I. Bill.

Chair will send a letter to the Veterans Committee Chairs that states the Council on Veterans Programs supports the DAV resolutions.

14. Legislative Update

No updates to report at this time.

15. Secretary's Comments

Secretary shared that the annual budget will be \$284 million dollars. Areas of focus will be mental healthcare including support to the Vet Court program and tuition remission for mental healthcare professions.

16. Council Members matters not subject to adoption

Mr. Gilbert, Jewish War Veterans, shared that the Milwaukee Veterans Community Relations Team is partnering with the Milwaukee Medical College to organize a symposium where researchers can come together to share their experiences and ideas related to treatment of PTSD.

Mr. Gilbert invited attendees to the Milwaukee War Memorial for the 25th Anniversary Commemoration event for the Vietnam Memorial to be held at 5:00 p.m. the day of the Council Meeting (October 20, 2016).

Mr. Landgraf, Marine Corps League, shared that he had recently attended a caregiver's convention where polytrauma and PTSD were identified as key issues.

Mr. Schmidt, AMVETs, suggested council term lengths for a future agenda item.

The Chair added that the council might also want to discuss the organizations who are authorized members, but who have not provided a representative for several meetings.

Mr. Peters, VVAW, shared his observation that younger Veterans are not well represented on the council, so it makes it difficult to determine their needs. It was suggested that Veterans Service Organizations consider offering meeting times that would work for students or working individuals as well as thinking outside the box for ways to attract younger Veterans.

17. Public Input

None

18. Future Meetings

Next meeting suggested for March 9th at WDVA Central Office.

19. Adjournment

It was moved, seconded, and carried on a voice vote to adjourn the meeting.

Elizabeth Benn
Chair

Attachments:

1. CVSO Association Resolution F01-16 *Regionalization of County Veterans Service Offices*
2. CVSO Association Resolution F02-16 *Returning the CVSO/TVSO Grant to a Block Grant Structure*
3. CVSO Association Press Release – *CVSOA-Wisconsin position in response to allegation at King Veterans Home*
4. CVSO Association Press Release – *County Veterans Service Officers Association of WI Elect New Officers*
5. DAV Resolution 2016-73 *Support A Graduated Revision To The Wisconsin Veterans And Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit*
6. DAV Resolution 2016-69 *Expansion of Benefits In The Wisconsin G.I. Bill For Spouses And Children Of Veterans With A Service-Connected Disability Rating Of At Least 30 Percent*

RESOLUTION F01-16

REGIONALIZATION OF COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICES

WHEREAS, Wisconsin Statutes § 45.80 requires each county to elect a County Veterans Service Officer who is a Wisconsin resident and who served under honorable conditions on active duty in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are responsible for the majority of veterans' claims with the VA at any given time; and

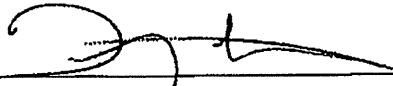
WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are a major stakeholder, along with other Veterans Service Organizations, in assisting veterans with obtaining more than \$2.7 billion in VA benefits annually; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are invaluable to all veterans, dependents, and their survivors but especially elderly and disabled claimants who are housebound, cannot ambulate easily, or are unable to drive; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are the only advocates who serve veterans right in their community that can help them navigate the sometimes complicated paperwork and processes when filing VA claims or appeals.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin, along with the Tribal Veterans Service Officers of Wisconsin, express to the Wisconsin State Legislature that we will contest any future legislation affecting the local delivery of services to veterans and their families without an unbiased, evidence-based evaluation of Wisconsin's veterans' services systems that has the sole intent of improving access, advocacy, and outcomes for Wisconsin's veterans and their families.

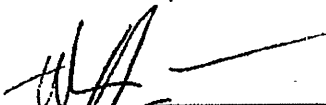
Approved by the members of the CVSOA of WI on this 5th day of October, 2016.



Tammy L. Walters, Resolutions Chairman



Laura Moore, Association Secretary



William Rosenau, Association President

RESOLUTION F02-16

RETURNING THE CVSO/TVSO GRANT TO A BLOCK GRANT STRUCTURE

WHEREAS, the County Veterans Service Office/Tribal Veterans Service Office Grant has operated as a block grant for CVSO/TVSO salary supplement since its legislative inception in 1973 with the intent of attracting and retaining talented CVSOs, TVSOs, and staff and as a means to fund improvements to veterans services within the county; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 biennium budget process altered this long standing block grant to a reimbursement only payment structure; and

WHEREAS this alteration restricted the expenditure of these funds to specific categories resulting in fiscal constraints which limit an individual county government's ability to manage these expenditures to meet the specific needs of their CVSO/TVSO; and

WHEREAS, the CVSO/TVSO Grant has undergone limited restructuring from the initial expenditure of \$1,000 per county in 1973 to the current grant amounts ranging from \$500 to a maximum of \$13,000 annually for the most populated counties, with the last increase being realized in 1997; and

WHEREAS, United States Department of Veterans Affairs studies show the changing veterans' demographics are reflective of a higher level of need, an increasing level of complexity in claims actions, and support that local, dedicated representation results in a higher success rate, and a greater benefit realized by the veteran and their families; and

WHEREAS, the extension of these federal benefits to veterans has a significant and direct effect on the veterans and their families and contributes significantly to the state's economy.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin requests the Wisconsin State Legislature to return the County Veterans Service Office/Tribal Veterans Service Office Grant to a block grant structure and consider an increase in the amount extended through these grants.

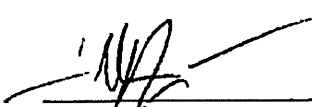
Voted on and approved this 5th day of October, 2016.



Tammy L. Walters, Resolutions Chairman



Laura Moore, Association Secretary



William Rosenau, Association President



1-844-WIS-CVSO (947-2876)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, September 22, 2016

Contact: 1-844-WIS-CVSO (947-2876)

cvsomedia@wicvso.org

OFFICERS

William Rosenau, Waushara
President

Joe Aulik, Winnebago
1st Vice President

Tammy Walters, Oneida
2nd Vice President

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Tony Tyzynski, Past President
Rock Larson, Wood, Legislative Chair
Kevin Johnson, Ozaukee, 2016
Ali Nelson, Racine, 2016
Scott Bachowski, Barron, 2017
Kevin Johnson, Bayfield, 2017
Jane Babcock, Kewaunee, 2018
Andy Miller, Dodge, 2018
Charlene Cobb, Sheboygan,
Treasurer

CVSOA-Wisconsin position in response to allegations at King Veterans Home

The County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin (CVSOA-WI) shares the deep concern surrounding the recent allegations made against the Veterans Home at King, and applauds the state legislators in supporting a non-partisan audit.

Our veterans, specifically those in our homes, comprise one of our most vulnerable populations. Given the sacrifices they and their loved ones have endured through their service to our state and country, they deserve nothing less than access to the greatest level of care and best quality of life available.

The Association recognizes that the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs has received 4 and 5 star ratings for their Veterans homes. WDVA has turned around an age-old funding and census shortfall and employed strategies to address staffing deficits found not only at King, but in skilled nursing facilities throughout the state.

The CVSOA WI also recognizes the dedication, advocacy and hard work of the employees and the volunteers at King. They are truly the heartbeat of the facility and historically do an outstanding job.

The allegations of unsanitary conditions and shortcomings in care seem to be contrary to the findings of the oversight inspections, and in stark contrast to the home's mission "to offer quality medical and nursing care that enhances quality of life..."

Given this disparity, and the serious nature of the allegations, the CVSO Association of Wisconsin applauds the call for an independent investigation to bring clarity to these issues. The focus must remain, as always, on ensuring the welfare and quality of life of the residents. A transparent third party review will offer a clearer view, and bring peace of mind to our veterans, their loved ones and the community as a whole.

/S/

William B. Rosenau
President, CVSO Association, Wisconsin

Laura J. Moore, Secretary, 225 N. Beaumont Rd., Ste#137, Prairie du Chien, WI. Phone: (608) 326-0204
Toll Free: 1-844-WIS-CVSO (947-2876) www.wicvso.org



1-844-WIS-CVSO (947-2876)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Tuesday, October 12, 2016

Contact: 1-844-WIS-CVSO (947-2876)

pao@wicvso.org

County Veterans Service Officers Association of WI Elect New Officers

The County Veterans Service Officers Association of Wisconsin elected new officers at their annual fall conference last week in Green Lake, WI. The new officers, as identified in the letter head above, would like to take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders for their efforts over the past year in protecting the integrity of the CVSO office and in helping veterans issues move forward in Wisconsin.

We live in an unprecedented time with veteran suicides and mental health issues at an all-time high and the increasing severity and complexity of service-connected conditions becoming signature wounds of the recent and ongoing wars.

The President and Executive Committee would like to take this opportunity to remind all stakeholders that the official positions of the CVSO Association of Wisconsin will always be distributed on the official letter head of the Association so all stakeholders can then be confident where the CVSO Association of Wisconsin stands on issues.

As we move into a new year, the CVSO Association of Wisconsin looks forward to working with all stakeholders to support the ZERO Suicide Initiative and strengthen awareness of veterans' benefits and CVSO offices around the state through a collaborative marketing campaign.

If you have any questions for the CVSO Association of Wisconsin, always feel free to reach out to our President, Joe Aulik, jaulik@co.winnebago.wi.us, 920-236-4898, our Legislative Chair, Rock Larson, rlarson@co.wood.wi.us, 715-421-8420 or any member of our Executive Committee. All contact information can be found on our webpage at www.wicvso.org.

OFFICERS

Joe Aulik, Winnebago
President

Tammy Walters, Oneida
1st Vice President

Dan Connery, Dane
2nd Vice President

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

William Rosenau, Past President
Rock Larson, Wood, Legislative Chair
Jane Babcock, Kewaunee, NE Rep.
Andy Miller, Dodge, SE Rep.
Scott Bachowski, Barron, NW Rep.
Laura Moore, Crawford, SW Rep.
Colin Moten, Juneau, COVP Delegate
Jim Young, Vernon, NACVSO Delegate
Ali Nelson, Training Chair
Charlene Cobb, Sheboygan, Treasurer

RESOLUTION 2016-73

**Support A Graduated Revision To The Wisconsin Veterans
And Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit**

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit provides veterans and unremarried surviving spouses a refundable tax credit for their primary, in-state residence; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs verifies the veteran's eligibility for the program and the credit is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue through state income tax return; and

WHEREAS, the definition of an eligible veteran and an eligible unremarried surviving spouse are:

- Veterans who had been a Wisconsin resident for a consecutive 5-year period after entering active duty or was a Wisconsin resident when entering active duty; and
- The veteran must have either a service-connected disability rating of 100 percent (%) under 38 USC 1114 or 1134 or a 100% disability rating based on individual unemployability; and
- The unremarried surviving spouse of an eligible veteran or an unremarried surviving spouse, who following the veteran's death, began to receive and continues to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and
- In addition to the above requirements, the veteran had to have been a resident of Wisconsin at the time of death for an unremarried surviving spouse to qualify for the Property Tax Credit; and

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois has recently implemented the Disabled Veterans' Standard Homestead Exemption which provides a reduction in the tax on a qualifying property owned by a veteran with a VA service-connected disability rating; and

WHEREAS, the exemption is graduated in the following manner:

- A \$2,500 exemption is available to a veteran with a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 30% but less than 50%; and
- A \$5,000 exemption is available to a veteran with a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 50% but less than 70%; and
- Veterans with a VA service-connected disability rating of at least 70% are exempt from paying property taxes on their primary residence; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin prides itself as being on the forefront of treating its veterans, especially disabled veterans, with dignity and respect; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV, Department of Wisconsin, assembled in State Convention in Green Bay, Wisconsin, June 9-12, 2016, shall support a graduated revision to the Wisconsin Veterans and Surviving Spouses Property Tax Credit based on the standards used in the Illinois Disabled Veterans' Standard Homestead Exemption.

RESOLUTION 2016-69

**Expansion Of Benefits In The Wisconsin G.I. Bill
For Spouses And Children Of Veterans With
A Service-Connected Disability Rating
Of At Least 30 Percent**

WHEREAS, Assembly Bill 40 (AB 40) or the Governor's Executive Budget Bill for 2013-2015 expands residency eligibility for veterans to use the Wisconsin G.I. Bill Tuition and Remission Program; and

WHEREAS, AB 40 now provides that eligible veterans must have been a Wisconsin resident at the time they entered the armed forces or be a Wisconsin resident for at least five consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, the qualified spouses, unremarried surviving spouses and children of veterans, who have been awarded at least a 30 percent service-connected disability rating by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and who were Wisconsin residents at the time they entered the armed forces, are eligible for the Wisconsin G.I. Bill Tuition and Remission Program; and

WHEREAS, the qualified spouses, unremarried surviving spouses and children of veterans, who have been awarded at least a 30 percent service-connected disability rating by VA and who have been a Wisconsin residents for at least five consecutive years, are *not* eligible for the Wisconsin G.I. Bill Tuition and Remission Program;
NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV, Department of Wisconsin in State Convention assembled in Green Bay, Wisconsin, June 9-11, 2016, supports the expansion of eligibility in the Wisconsin G.I. Bill Tuition and Remission Program to qualified spouses, unremarried surviving spouses and children of veterans who has been awarded at least 30 percent service-connected disability rating by VA and who have been a Wisconsin resident for at least five consecutive.

